IN-46-ER 169425

GLOBAL AURORAL IMAGING FOR THE DYNAMICS EXPLORER MISSION

NAG5-483

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

November 01, 1984 — January 31, 1998

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The two Dynamics Explorer spacecraft, DE-1 and DE-2, were launched on August 3, 1981, into polar coplanar orbits at different altitudes for the purpose of studying interactive processes within the atmosphere-ionosphere-magnetosphere system. The DE-1 spacecraft (high-altitude mission) used an elliptical orbit that was selected to allow (1) measurements extending from the hot magnetospheric plasma through the plasmasphere to the cool ionosphere; (2) global auroral imaging, wave measurements in the heart of the magnetosphere, and crossing of auroral field lines at several earth radii; and (3) measurements for significant periods of time along a magnetic field flux tube.

The orbit of Dynamics Explorer 1 offered an opportunity to obtain global images of Earth's dayglow and auroral luminosities and to acquire consecutive images of the entire auroral oval during the growth, onset, expansion, and recovery phases of substorms. Initial orbital parameters at launch on August 3, 1981, were an inclination of 90°, perigee and apogee altitudes of 570 km and 3.65 Earth radius, respectively, and an orbital period of 6.83 hours. The initial latitude of apogee at 78.2° N provided excellent viewing of the northern auroral oval, and the precession rate of 0.218° per day allowed similar viewing of the southern polar regions in 1983. Apogee returned to the northern polar region in the autumns of 1984 and 1987.

The University of Iowa's Spin-scan Auroral Imaging (SAI) instrument, was on-board DE-1. SAI was activated in orbit and placed in routine operation on September 23, 1981, and has provided outstanding new contributions in the fields of auroral, magnetospheric and geocoronal physics, introduced a powerful tool for the study of global atmospheric ozone, and initiated the first search from space for marine bioluminescence on the surface of the global ocean.

The SAI instrumentation consists of three imaging photometers, two for visible wavelengths and the third for vacuum-ultraviolet wavelengths equipped with primary catoptric optics with superpolished mirror surfaces. The primary focusing element is an off-axis section of a parabolic mirror that is used to provide an optical path completely free of support structures for the mirrors. SAI met or exceeded all design specifications and functioned normally with no degradation to electronics, sensors, optics or electromechanical devices.

A spacecraft malfunction on 1 June 1982 deprived the three imaging photometers of their primary (normal) source of nadir reference pulses. Operations continued using the alternate (advanced) source of three reference nadir pulses with a 60° phase shift in the imaging fields for multiple-photometer operation. The spacecraft contractor (RCA) speculated at the time that output gates from the spacecraft nadir generator may have latched in a non-

recoverable mode of operation. On 21 November 1982 it was discovered that the primary nadir pulses were again present. The reason for this spontaneous return is unknown.

The loss of a spacecraft analog data channel on 23 June 1984 had no operational impact upon the imaging instrumentation and resulted in no loss of scientific information. Routine (normal) imaging operations continued until the spacecraft intermittently stopped accepting commands starting on 17 November 1990. DE-1 operations were officially terminated on 28 February 1991. From the start of operations to the official termination, the SAI imagers acquired 1,250,000 images of the aurorae, dayglow, geocorona, and comets at ultraviolet and visible wavelengths.

DATA PROCESSING and ARCHIVING

GSFC continued to decommutate SAI imaging data and forward these data to Iowa until the turnoff of the Sigma-9 computer in September 1991. 100% of image processing was completed for all imaging data at Iowa which is processible.

All decommutated data tapes received from GSFC were read and logged upon receipt to verify that the data could be extracted and that the tape label correctly identified the contents of each tape. The tape number and contents were entered into a computer file. The orbit and attitude data from GSFC were received separately and handled in a similar manner.

When the imaging and orbit data were available for a full operations sequence (spacecraft turn—on to shut—off), image processing commenced. The image processing comprised three tasks: image reconstruction, nadir corrections and orbit—attitude merge. Routine image reconstruction was performed only for 30° Earth—centered images. Nadir corrections were necessary to correct irregularities in performance of the spacecraft spin—phase reference pulse generation. Production information was filed in computer files.

A library was created of menu-driven software which allowed outside investigators to quickly become adept at using the DE image catalog. This on-line data catalog provided a user with detailed information concerning 1) commands scheduled for the auroral imaging instrumentation, 2) status of data processing, 3) lists of images, by mission analysis file (MAF) numbers, created at imaging processing, and 4) estimated imaging geometry for times specified by the user. These catalogs were available on SPAN. Images were stored on high-quality, high-density tapes and 35-mm survey slides were created for all images.

Transfer of auroral imaging data to the optical disks began in January 1990—one set of disks for the NSSDC and a second set for the University of Iowa archives. These sets comprised approximately 272,000 images.

DESAI image data was provided upon request via 35-mm survey slides, glossy prints, reproduction-quality transparencies or prints, and electronically in formatted graphics files, to numerous research facilities, universities, publishers, TV stations, and interested individuals. Raw image data files were provided to researchers on magnetic tape or via

computer network. Assistance with the use of SAI data was available and provided at the University of Iowa throughout the grant period of performance.

The recent procurement of a RAID controller to manage expansion hard drive space, an X-Terminal workstation and a network switch, provides permanent data access to DESAI UV photometer images via the WWW. Survey views of all ultraviolet auroral images from 1981 to 1991 are available on the WWW at

http://www-pi-physics.uiowa.edu/www/desai/

COMPREHENSIVE SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

• Measurement of polar cap areas.

The area is observed to increase following a southward turning of the INTERPLANETARY MAGNETIC FIELD and to contract with substorm onset. Variations in this area are directly related to the energy content of the flaring section of the geomagnetic tail.

- Measurements of the latitudinal motions of the aurora in the midnight sector following substorm onset.
 - The aurora moves poleward at an average speed of approximately 200-350 m/s, with complex features on time scales of approximately 15 minutes. The optical signature of a 'poleward leap' has not been detected.
- Direct comparison of observed auroral emission intensities with simultaneous radar observations of ionospheric electrodynamics and inferred auroral emission intensities. (Guest Investigator Program)
- Discovery of the theta aurora.
- Established that the transpolar arc of the theta aurora exists simultaneously in the two polar caps.
- Observations of Comet Halley.
 - Unique images of Comet Halley were obtained in the light of solar Lyman- α radiation resonantly scattered by the comet's coma of neutral hydrogen gas. The observation periods were from mid-December 1985 through 29 January 1986, prior to perihelion, and from 25 February through 21 March in the post-perihelion period. From these observations the production rate of hydrogen is established for heliocentric distances approximately 0.64 to 1.2 AU.
- Magnetic mapping between the source region for auroral kilometric radiation (AKR) and the discrete aurora.
 - A joint investigation using DE-1 plasma-wave observations and auroral images demonstrated that the AKR source region at altitudes of 1-2 earth radii is located on magnetic field lines which thread bright, discrete auroral forms. While this mapping

has been assumed based on other, earlier work, this investigation provided definitive proof.

- The ultraviolet spin-scan photometer provided the most extensive series of geocoronal images to date. The extent of this imaging campaign in terms of observation time and range of viewing geometries allowed accurate determinations of the parameters for a spherical Chamberlain [1963] model, a search for temporal variations during a fraction of a solar cycle, and an image of the atomic hydrogen geotail.
- The discrete aurora observed with the DE-1 auroral images has been mapped to the
 plasma sheet boundary layer observed simultaneously with plasma instrumentation on
 the ISEE spacecraft. The magnetic mapping used the model field of Tsyganenko and
 Usmanov.
- Observed that the latitudinal and local time distributions of atmospheric 'holes' in the VUV-wavelength dayglow are similar to those for meteoric impacts.
- Interpretation of atmospheric 'holes'. Localized, transient depressions in the brightness of the atmospheric dayglow at vacuum–ultraviolet wavelengths have been interpreted as the optical signature of the infall of approximately 20 small ($\sim 2-4 \times 10^7$ gram each) comets per minute into Earth's atmosphere.
- The localized transient decreases in VUV-wavelength dayglow observed with the VUV auroral imager on DE 1, and interpreted as the optical signature of infalling small comets, has been observed in the Viking VUV images. The analysis was carried out at Iowa after a brief visit to the University of Calgary.
- A Master's thesis and oral examination were completed by J. B. Sigwarth. The thesis title is "Imaging of Absorption and Emission Features of Water-Vapor Clouds Associated with Small Comets as Observed with Dynamics Explorer 1".
- Participated in the Third Environmental Reactions Induced by Comets (ERIC) rocket flight from Wallops Island on 10 September 1988.
- Successful measurement of the diffuse UV radiation (Fix et al., 1988) from galactic and extragalactic sources.
- An extensive investigation of the zodiacal light was carried out at UV wavelengths during the spacecraft maneuver from the orbit-normal position.

PRESENTATIONS

Scientific Meetings Attended for which DE-1 Auroral Imaging Results were presented.

- 1. 1984 Fall Meeting of the American Geophysical Union, 3-7 December 1984, San Francisco, CA.
 - Craven, J. D. and L. A. Frank, An Apparent Signature of Modifications to the Upper Atmosphere During Aurora Substorms, <u>EOS</u>, <u>65</u>(45), 1021, 1984.
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 - Vondrak, R. R., R. M. Robinson, J. D. Craven and L. A. Frank, Simultaneous Measurements of Ionization by the Chatanika Radar and Optical Emissions by the DE-1 Spin-Scan Auroral Imager, <u>EOS</u>, <u>65</u>(45), 1020, 1984.
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- 3. IUGG/IAGA XVIII General Assembly, 5-17 August 1985, Prague, Czechoslovakia.
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- Frank, L. A., Auroral Observations from the Atmosphere and Dynamics Explorer Satellites.
- Huang, C. Y., L. A. Frank, J. D. Craven, W. K. Peterson, D. J. Williams, W. Lennartsson, D. G. Mitchell, R. C. Elphic and C. T. Russell, Filamentary Structures in the Magnetotail.
- 4. Chapman Conference on Magnetotail Physics, Applied Physics Laboratory, Johns Hopkins University, 28-31 October 1985, Laurel, MD.
 - Craven, J. D., L. A. Frank and T. E. Eastman, Latitudinal Motions of Auroras in the Midnight Sector During Substorms.
- 5. 1985 Fall Meeting of the American Geophysical Union, 9-13 December 1985, San Francisco, CA.
 - Craven, J. D., Comparisons of Plasma-Sheet Boundary Motions with Auroral Oval Dynamics Using DE 1 and ISEEs 1, 2, and 3, <u>EOS</u>, <u>66</u>(46), 1028, 1985. (Invited)
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- 7. 1986 Spring Meeting of the American Geophysical Union, Baltimore, MD, 19-22 May 1986.
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